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INTRODUCTION TO CONCEPTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

By

Dr. A. H. Sequeira

National Institute of Technology Karnataka,
Surathkal, India

Abstract

It is an accepted fact that teachers are usually not born but made. Good teachers nurture their knowledge and skills through constant and deliberate efforts. One of the pre-requisite to be good teacher is to understand the teaching learning process in more depth. This facilitates better appreciation of the teaching profession as well as the process of imparting education. This paper is intended to give an insight into the concept of teaching and learning for teachers who intend to excel in their teaching career.

Introduction

‘As teachers we tend to think that teaching is all about teachers and our role; in fact the most important aspects of the educational process are the students and what they learn.’ This leads us to consider what we mean by 'learning'. As you read the educational literature and, more specifically, educational psychology, you find many differences in theories and definitions.

Concept of Learning

Learning is about a change: the change brought about by developing a new skill, understanding a scientific law, changing an attitude. The change is not merely incidental or natural in the way that our appearance changes as we get older. Learning is a relatively permanent change, usually brought about intentionally. When we attend a course, search through a book, or read a discussion paper, we set out to learn!

Other learning can take place without planning, for example by experience. Generally with all learning there is an element within us of wishing to remember and understand why something happens and to do it better next time.

Main Learning Theories

- The Behaviorists - (behaviorism: Stimulus – Response)
- The Neo-Behaviorists (Neo-behaviorism: Human Mind)

- The Gestaltists (Insight)
- The Cognitivists (Cognitive development: Learning to think)
- The Humanists (Active nature of Learner)

Learning Models:

We are often faced with questions such as : Why use models? How to teach? How student Learn? Answer comes from experience of many people over many years in form of Models. Such Models can be used by any teacher depending on context. Example: Pedagogical Vs Andragogical Models. Pedagogical approach teacher dominated learning situation - Students rather passive. Andragogical approach - emphasis on what the learner is doing - how adults learn.

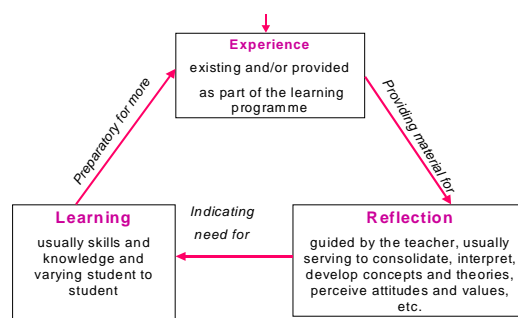
Adult Expectations (Learning Needs):

Some of the common adult expectations are :

- Adults expect to be taught.
- Adult students expect to have to work hard.
- Adult student expectation is that the work is related to the vocation.
- Adult student's expectation is that they expect to be treated as adults.

Each of these four expectations although stated in general terms needs to be interpreted as individual needs. Students may vary in age, sex, background, etc. If students treated as individuals - find out more about them (inside - outside classroom), the greater likelihood to relate their learning to their needs and improve learning potential. Kindness, empathy and sincerity always reap rich dividends with adult learner.

Experience, Reflection, Learning Model to Optimize Learning



Source: Ian Reece and Stephen Walker

In 1981, Further Education Unit (FEU), UK documented a suggested model of lesson design to help overcome the problems associated with the second and more readily

applied of the approaches. This *Experience, Reflection, Learning Model*, they suggested, embodied the principles that:

- (i) the process should be focused on the student's current experience,
- (ii) it recognizes the adult nature of the learner by according responsibility for what is learned, and how, and
- (iii) the learning can take place in a variety of contexts.

The suggestion was that the learning process should be considered in three phases; first, the student's *experience* needs to be followed by, secondly, some organized *reflection*. This reflection ensures that the student learns from the experience and also helps, thirdly, to identify any need for some *specific learning* before further experience is acquired.

Concept of Teaching:

Teaching is a set of events, outside the learners which are designed to support internal process of learning. Teaching (Instruction) is outside the learner. Learning is internal to learners. You cannot motivate others if you are not self-motivated. Motives are not seen, but, Behaviors are seen. Is learning a motive or behavior? Learning is both a motive and behavior but only behavior is seen, learning is internal, performance is external.

Role of the Teacher:

Generally ,the role of teacher can be categorized into:

- Traditional Role - Teacher Centered
- Modern Role - Facilitator (Student Centered)

There has been a change from the Traditional role to the Modern role in the present context. The learning increases when the teacher builds on the previous experience of the student. However, individual's learning differs and each individual learns at his or her own pace. Identifying the slow learners and individual attention of the teacher may be required. Thus, effective learning is to a great extent based on experiences. Direct experiences are student centered and participation in problem solving. While in indirect experience, the contents are carefully designed and organized by teacher.

Basic Teaching Model:

Objectives are intended learning outcomes written down before the process of instruction. General Objectives - Statement of instructional intent - student ability in general terms. Specific objective statement of instructional intent- student ability in terms of specific & observable. Usefulness of objectives, Elements of objectives, Terminal behavior Condition, and Criterion / Criteria.

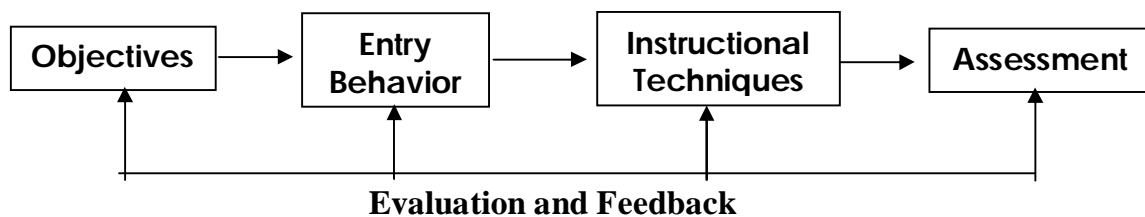
Writers tend to separate learning into three main groups or domains. These are the psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains. Those skills, which are concerned with

physical dexterity, for example changing a wheel and giving an injection, fall into the psychomotor domain. Both of the tasks do need knowledge but, predominantly they are physical skills, which need practice. Knowledge and knowing the 'how' and the 'why', the thinking skills, fall into the cognitive domain. Examples include 'stating the names of the major bones in the body', 'explaining why we have tides'. Both of these require thought processes to be accomplished.

The third domain, and one we often neglect, is the affective domain. This is concerned with attitudes. Examples in this domain include 'the need to eat a healthy, balanced diet', 'the need for equality of opportunity for all', and 'politeness'. These deal with feelings and emotions and are different from the examples in the other domains.

Affective Learning occurs when these three domains are seen as interdependent. Each of these domains should be developed as part of teaching/ learning session. Teachers should be able to define learning objectives in each of them.

Learning in these three domains often needs different teaching and learning approaches. They are often considered in isolation but in practice learning may occur simultaneously in all three.



Source: Ian Reece and Stephen Walker

Traditional versus Modern role

Traditionally the role of the teacher has been as a purveyor of information: the teacher was the fount of all knowledge. This suggests a picture of students sitting in rows in front of the teacher who is talking and passing information to students with the aid of a blackboard, while the students either listen passively or, if the teacher is lucky, take their own notes.

This, of course, is not true any more. The modern teacher is a facilitator: a person who assists students to learn for themselves. Instead of having students sitting in rows, they are likely to be in groups, all doing something different; some doing practical tasks, some writing, some not even in the room but in another part of the building using specialist equipment or looking up something in the library. All of the students might well be at different stages in their learning and in consequence, the learning is individualized to suit individual requirements and abilities.

This change from the traditional model is the result of a number of factors. First, it is recognized that adults, unlike small children, have a wealth of experience and are able to

plan their learning quite efficiently. Second, not all individuals learn in the same manner, so that if a teacher talks to students some might benefit, but others might not. Third, everyone learns at their own pace and not, of necessity, at the pace set by the teacher. Hence, the individualizing of learning has defined advantages.

Research into the ways that people learn has not provided teachers with any specific answers. If it had, all teachers would be using the same techniques. However, researchers have identified that learning is generally more effective if it is based on experiences; either direct experiences or experiences that have been read about. Of the two types of experiences, the former is more likely to be effective than the latter. Thus concepts that are able to be practiced or seen are more likely to be learning. To apply this in a practical situation in post-16 education and training, learning is more likely to be effective when it is related to, and conducted in, the knowledge of a student's (work) experience.

We need, at this stage, to consider how we as teachers might best provide the experiences so as to make the learning as easy and quick as possible. We might consider two possible approaches to the design of a teaching programme.

- (i) A programme where the content is carefully derived from an analysis of the student's personal, social and/or vocational needs and which is implemented by you in such a controlled and organized manner that the student is almost certain to learn, and is aware when the learning has taken place. By this method motivation is generated by immediate success and the avoidance of failure.

Unfortunately this rarely takes place because it has a fundamental drawback. Apart from the requirement for the students to place themselves in the hands of the teacher and thus tend to develop a relationship of dependency, it confirms to them that learning is a process which is organized by someone who knows better. It does not help students to learn on their own.

- (ii) The other approach starts from the experience of the student, experience that has taken place as part of life or which has been organized as part of the programme. It then depends upon the student identifying and accepting a need to learn. Such an approach has been described as 'problem solving', 'student-centered learning', 'participative learning', and so on.

The problem with this approach is to ensure that important areas of learning are not omitted and that the 'right' balance is struck between these areas, and that each area is learned as effectively as possible.

Teaching methods which allow this second approach to be implemented include:

- project work derived from students' current experiences;
- discussions which allow students to recognize and consolidate what the experience has taught them, and also lead them to identify what else they need to learn and practice;

- the learning of specific problem-solving techniques which can be applied to a range of situations;
- activities designed to provide opportunities for specific learning outcomes.

Such a list of teaching approaches identifies a second problem associated with the approach; that of (over) concentrating upon the activities – the practical work which tends to be more enjoyable, and neglecting to recognize the possible learning that can accrue from such activities.

Conclusion:

The paper gives insight into a few concepts of teaching and learning, especially at the higher levels of education. Many countries make it mandatory for teachers to undergo formal course on education principles where the concepts of teaching and learning are taught. However, this exposure to teachers is non-existent for professional teachers who enter into teaching profession without any exposure to formal training in education. This sometimes may act as a constraint in the process of effective teaching and learning process.

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